

Are you prepared?



Emergency Preparedness
Richmond City Health District
Virginia Department of Health

Are You Prepared?

The likelihood that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation you do today. While each person's abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies, whether it's a fire, flood or terrorist attack. By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared.

The Richmond City Health District, part of the Virginia Department of Health, wants all residents to be prepared when an emergency occurs. This brochure provides helpful tips on health, food safety and creating an emergency kit. Individuals are also encouraged to talk to their family, pharmacist and health care providers to ensure that all medical needs are met.

All citizens are encouraged to:

- 1) Get a Kit
- 2) Make a Plan
- 3) Be Informed

We are doing our part to make sure you are protected; now it is time to do yours. In an emergency you cannot depend on regular services because normal operations may be suspended. Using that as a basis, develop your emergency plan.

1) Medications, Medical Supplies, and Oxygen

Many times when people prepare for disasters they fail to ensure that they have enough medications, home medical supplies, and oxygen. You may not be able to make it to the pharmacy during or days after a disaster. In addition, first responders are not likely to be in a position to refresh your supplies. Talk with your pharmacist and supplier to make sure that you have enough medical supplies for you and your family.



If you are insulin dependent, a power outage could impact how best to store your medicine. It is recommended that insulin be stored in a refrigerator at approximately 35 to 46° F to maintain potency. Unopened and stored in this manner, these products maintain potency until the expiration date on the package. However, if refrigeration is not an option, insulin products can maintain their effectiveness for 28 days if stored in temperatures between 59 and 86°. You should not use ice to keep insulin cold because it can freeze and lose its effectiveness.

More information about insulin can be found here:

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/EmergencyPreparedness/ucm085213.htm>

There are other medications that may require refrigeration. Read the prescription label or consult with your prescribing physician or pharmacist to learn more about your medications. This information should be included in your personal and family emergency plan.

2) Food

You should have enough non-perishable food for each person in your household for at least three days. Don't forget the manual can opener!

Perishable food

Food should be stored at certain temperatures to ensure that it's safe to eat. Frozen foods should be kept well below 32° F, and refrigerated foods should be kept below 41° F. If possible, check the temperature of food using a clean metal stem thermometer to ensure that your food maintains the appropriate temperature.

All potentially hazardous foods, such as poultry, seafood, meats, dairy, and leftovers that have been exposed to temperatures above 41° F for four hours or more, should be discarded. Most refrigerators can maintain proper temperature for up to four hours if the door is kept closed. During longer power outages the food may not be safe to eat.

When ice is used to keep food cold during extended power outages lasting more than 4 hours, there is a risk of illness if the temperatures is not carefully regulated. Food should not be re-cooled, re-heated and consumed. It can lead to illness. If in doubt, residents should throw it out.



More information about food safety can be found here:
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater/facts.asp>



3) Infant Formula

During an extended power outage, parents should use the powder formula which is mixed with water. It's recommended that you mix what you need and discard what you don't use. Unused formula can be refrigerated for 24 to 48 hours for later use.

4) Preventing Extreme Heat and Cold Illnesses

During extreme heat it is recommended that you stay in an air-conditioned building. If your home does not have air conditioning, a shopping mall or public library, can provide relief. Even a few hours spent in an air conditioned building can help the body stay cooler. Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the 90's, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath is also an option.

Drink lots of non-alcoholic fluids to maintain proper hydration. You should also avoid fluids with large amounts of sugar or caffeine.

Elderly adults who live alone and may be at high risk of heat-related illnesses due to chronic disease, should be checked on at least twice a day for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. If you have infants and young children, it's recommended that you watch them more frequently.



Extreme Heat

More information about preventing extreme heat illnesses can be found here:

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.asp>

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it.

Hypothermia most often occurs at very cold temperatures; but it can occur even when temperatures are cool. (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweats, or is submersed into cold water.

Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods—the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.

Warnings signs of hypothermia:

Adults:

- shivering, exhaustion
- confusion, fumbling hands
- memory loss, slurred speech
- drowsiness

Infants:

- bright red, cold skin
- very low energy



Extreme Cold

A person with severe hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or may not seem to be breathing. In this case, handle the victim gently, and get emergency assistance immediately. <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/takesteps/>

What to Do

If you notice any of the warning signs get medical attention immediately.

5) Mental Health



The days and weeks after a disaster can take a mental toll on you and your family. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) advises that in addition to your physical health, take time to consider your mental health. Remember that some sleeplessness, anxiety, anger, hyperactivity, mild depression, fear or lethargy is normal following a threatening event. However, if symptoms continue seek counseling.

The Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) can help you find the resources or healthcare providers needed. (804) 819-4000 or (804) 819-4100

There are many things you can do to cope with traumatic events:

- Keep as many elements of your normal routine incorporated into the disaster plans, including activities to allay children's fears.
- Be aware that you may have fewer resources to address your daily needs. Therefore, it's best to resolve what you can ahead of time.
- Turn to family, friends and social or religious groups to set-up support networks to help deal with potential stressors.
- Let your child know that it is okay to feel upset when something bad or scary happens.
- Encourage your child to express feelings and thoughts and respond without making judgments.

6) Preventing the spread of germs and disease

Germs are spread when people forget to wash their hands or don't wash their hands thoroughly. Basic hygiene is very important during a disaster period. Always wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- After using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- After handling uncooked food
- After playing with a pet
- After handling garbage
- After tending to someone who is sick or injured
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After participating in cleaning or cleanup activities
- After handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage
- Before preparing or eating food
- Before treating a cut or wound
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses



How Should You Wash Your Hands?

- Use soap and warm running water; water that has been disinfected or water that has been boiled and cooled.
- Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, back of hands, fingers and under fingernails.
- Rub hands together for at least 10 to 15 seconds and then rinse.
- Dry with a clean and/or disposable towel.
- Use the towel to turn off the water faucet.
- If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used.



<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/sanitation.asp>

Get your flu shot!

Flu like symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue

Some people may also experience vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

To protect yourself against the flu:

1) Take time to get a flu shot

- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccination as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccination as soon as the vaccine is available.
- It is especially important that people who are high risk be vaccinated to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart & lung disease, and those 65 years and older.

2) Take steps to prevent the spread of germs, which includes overall good basic hygiene and:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone unless you're getting medical care or other medical needs. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.



7) Animals

Humans are not the only ones impacted when a disaster occurs. Animals may be disoriented following a disaster.

Just as you do with your family's emergency kit, think about the basics for survival, particularly food and water.

- Food - Keep at least three days of food in an airtight container
- Water - Store at least three days of water

specifically for your pets

- Medications - Keep an extra supply of medications your pet takes on a regular basis
- Collar with ID tag, harness or leash - Your pet should wear a collar with its rabies tag and identification at all times
- Sanitation - Include pet litter and litter box if appropriate, towels, plastic trash bags, and newspapers for proper sanitation
- Crate or Pet Carrier - Keep a sturdy, safe, and comfortable pet carrier ready for transporting your pet
- Familiar Items - Put favorite toys, treats, or bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) advises residents to be cautious when coming in contact with wild or stray animals. If you come across a wild or stray animal following a disaster, you should call animal control.

Dead and diseased animals may also pose a threat. Decaying carcasses create biological waste and attract flies and rodents, which can spread disease. They may also contaminate groundwater and cause bad odors. Animal carcasses should be disposed of as soon as possible to avoid creating a health hazard to animals or humans.

Contact the City of Richmond Animal Care & Control (804) 646-5573 for specific disposal guidance.

1 Get A Kit – Use the checklist below to start assembling your kit. Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at least three days, maybe longer. Think first about fresh water, food, and clean air.

2 Make A Plan – Plan in advance what you and your family will do in an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation. Use common sense and whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Develop a family communications plan, create a plan to shelter-in-place and to get away, and know emergency plans at school and work.

3 Be Informed – Understand what might happen during different emergency situations and prepare for the unexpected. Some ways that you can prepare include assembling an emergency supplies kit and developing a family communications plan.

4 Get Involved – After preparing yourself and your family for possible emergencies, **take the next step** and get involved in preparing your community. Join the Richmond City Medical Reserve Corps, which actively involves citizens in making our community safer, stronger, and better prepared. We want people from all backgrounds, medical and non-medical, to be trained to support the city during a public health emergency. Go to www.vamrc.org to find out more and/or sign up.



Go to www.ready.gov to get more information on citizen preparedness.



Suggested Emergency Kit Check list

- ☐ Water—at least one gallon per person per day for at least three days
- ☐ Food—non-perishable food for at least three days (select items that require no preparation, refrigeration or cooking such as high energy foods and ready-to-eat canned meat, vegetables, fruit)
- ☐ Manual can opener (if the food is canned), preferably on a multi-tool
- ☐ Reusable plates, cups, utensils, saucepan (note, a metal bowl can double as a cup or plate)
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Prescription medications and medical equipment/care aids
- ☐ N95- or N100-rated dust masks
- ☐ Personal sanitation supplies, such as moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties
- ☐ Hand-crank or battery-operated flashlight
- ☐ Hand-crank radio or battery-operated cell phone charger
- ☐ All-hazards NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather radio
- ☐ Extra batteries at the size required
- ☐ Brightly colored plastic poncho (can be used as shelter, clothing or a marker)
- ☐ Weather appropriate clothing to keep your family warm and dry
- ☐ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- ☐ Cash in the local currency
- ☐ Any tools needed for turning off utilities
- ☐ Local maps and your family emergency plan
- ☐ Important documents, including will, medical and financial power of attorney, property documents, medical instructions
- ☐ Emergency preparedness handbook



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(804) 205-3500
www.vdh.state.va.us/lhd/richmondcity